

In the name of God, who makes us, loves us, and keeps us. Amen

HEADLINE: Risen Jesus Eats Broiled Fish Filet.

‘Dateline Jerusalem: Witnesses report that Jesus of Nazareth, who was thought to have been dead by crucifixion three days before, suddenly appeared on Sunday afternoon and ate a piece of leftover fish. It is unclear how this was possible, though earlier reports that same morning said that his body was missing from the tomb where it had been buried just hours before the Passover observance was to begin. Unverified accounts suggest that his death was not the last his followers will see of him. They insist that he himself had predicted such appearances prior to his death, and that they would be on the lookout for further possible sightings. As of late Sunday, authorities expressed doubt that these witness reports were true, but were unable to provide any clues to resolve this mystery. One was heard to say that it was unlikely, since such an apparition of a dead man would not feel hunger nor be able to consume a meal, despite the insistence of the witnesses. This is an ongoing story, as investigations continue.’

What does Resurrection look like? Well, according to the 24th chapter of Luke’s Gospel, it has flesh and bone, speaks with a voice in conversation, and even is hungry enough to eat. Jesus shows the eleven disciples his hands and his feet, but in this account there is no mention of the wounds he sustained at the crucifixion. Could it be that he thinks that these extremities, hands and feet, are places on the body where bones and flesh are most noticeable? The hands that have broken bread with them so many times before? And the feet which have endured the dust of the road for so many miles with them? Look closely, he says, and see that it is I myself, not some apparition, not some ghost, not some wisp of vague substance you can only see out of the corner of your eye, but I myself, and I am real. And, by the way, I’m hungry enough after these three days to even eat a piece of your badly-broiled fish! And so, he took it and ate it in their presence.

There is much more to Luke’s account of that Resurrection Sunday in chapter 24 of his Gospel, much more than just the snippet I read for you this morning, and I would encourage you to crack open your Bibles and read the whole chapter, or read it online if that’s your practice. Online reading is sometimes helpful, since you can check various translations with just a flick of your wrist at sites like Bible Gateway. But know that each Sunday all year long, as we gather on the Lord’s Day, we celebrate Resurrection. Like the disciples who find Jesus suddenly and unexpectedly in their midst eating fish, we long for the Lord’s resurrected presence here with us, too. We long to have his presence open our minds and warm our hearts and promote his peace. We long to hear his own voice teach us the meaning of the scriptures. We long to have him sort out the clues of resurrected life for us. We long to see and touch him and know for sure that it is really he himself. What do you think? Is this something we can expect to experience all these years later?

What does it matter? That was a question we asked at our Thursday evening Bible Study this past week. What does it matter that the disciples were able to recognize Jesus personally, as flesh and bone? We have been reading from the First Letter of John, as we heard in today’s second lesson, and we will be continuing that survey throughout the Easter season. In this letter, or essay, John encourages his readers to watch for just how the resurrected Jesus will be revealed, especially since

we can expect to be like him. Now, he says that it is yet uncertain just what we will become, but when we get there, we will know that we will be like him, for we are children of God. And being children of God, we long to be faithful. And our faithfulness will lead us home. But, what does it matter that the risen Jesus was able to eat a piece of fish? Had Jesus just been a ghost all along, had he never been human as well as divine, then how could we hope to be like him in any way? If he had been just a spiritual apparition, a remote spirit who was just pretending to walk among us, how could we really aspire to follow his model and be like him? And why then would his rising from the dead be a big deal?

What the disciples witnessed that Sunday evening in Jerusalem, and during the forty days until Jesus' Ascension, provided them with not only a fantastic story to tell their grandchildren, but also a hope that all people can truly find resurrection in their lives. Had Jesus not eaten that piece of fish, they might not have been convinced. And, on down the line, they and the Apostles who have followed have hoped to convince us, have hoped that everyone, from every nation, tribe, and language, could know what they have seen, hear what they have heard, and be touched by those peace-giving hands which touched them. When we celebrate Holy Communion in the manner which has been handed down to us, we ask that Jesus may be KNOWN to us in the breaking of the bread, that we in our own time and space may recognize Christ in our own midst. And it mattered so much to the disciples that together they sought to presume to be Christ's resurrected Body in their own world, a world which, like ours, had its share of oppression and misery and warfare and hunger. A world, which like our own, was in desperate need of the peace which the Lord had passed to them. And they hoped and prayed that those who heard them, who saw the pattern of their lives, who felt their touch, would come to know Christ through them.

In our passage from the Book of Acts this morning, the disciples have just healed a man who could not walk, and are being challenged about it by the crowd. Thing is, they have healed him in Jesus' name, in the name of God's gracious love. They have not turned away with scorn or indifference, but have actively done the faithful thing. They have presumed, faithfully, to be Christ's resurrected Body and to call themselves by his name, summoning all the power and authority Jesus meant for them to have. This is their spiritual legacy, and one which they commend to us as well. We, too, can be agents of healing and wholeness in Jesus' name, and, God knows, there is need of that! In Jesus' name we can pass the peace, bring strength to the weakened, and even share a fish dinner with those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. "Little children", John says in his letter, "let no one deceive you. Everyone who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous." Just as the resurrected Jesus continues to be righteous, even beyond the grave. And his words echo down the ages: "Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem."

'Dateline Oneida: Witnesses report seeing a large body of unidentified persons exiting a building on South Main Street Sunday morning. While no identities have been released, some onlookers thought that this body of people bore a vague but compelling resemblance to an ancient character named Jesus of Nazareth. Others claimed that they heard shouting in a foreign language which may have been the praise word 'Alleluia', and also the faint ringing of bells. While no cause for this event has yet been revealed, it appears to be a continuing story, and we will be following its further implications.' Amen. Alleluia!